

Caribou
(text and photos by Dr. Trudy Sable, Director, OANR)

Woodland Caribou Management Module

February 19-28, 2007

The Woodland Caribou Management module was part of a larger initiative undertaken within the fiscal year, 2006-2007, with funding from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada through the Gorsebrook Research Institute/ Saint Mary's University in partnership with the Innu Nation. This initiative involved developing a caribou management curriculum for the Innu Environmental Guardians, which included situating caribou management and protection training within a context that is culturally meaningful to the Innu. This larger context is considered integral to the specific efforts of the Species At Risk Act for conservation and protection of the Woodland caribou boreal populations.

To this end, two Caribou management training modules were planned to coincide with peak migration times of the caribou herds of most significance to the Innu communities of Labrador and Quebec—the George River herd, whose territory now extends into the Lake Melville region, and the Mealy Mountain Red Wine herd, of particular concern to Species at Risk Act initiatives.

The first module, *Innuts mak Atikwuts: The Innu and Caribou in a Shared Landscape; 8,000 years of Innu Culture and History in Northern Nitassinan* (a.k.a. Fieldwork in Archaeology) took place from September-October, 2006. The second of module, *Woodland Caribou Management*, was held February 19-28, 2007, and targeted specific objectives outlined by the Canadian Wildlife Service, whose funding helped support the development of this module. Both Gary Yetman and Isabelle Schmeltzer of the Canadian Wildlife Service were present during two days of the module.

The majority of the module was held in a field tent approximately 20 minutes from the community of Sheshatshiu, Labrador, and focused on methods to determine health indicators for the endangered Red Wine Woodland caribou herd.



The Classroom



The Outdoor Classroom

As has been core to all these modules, respected *tshishennuat* (elders) and experienced Innu Guardians acted as professors and advisors in teaching their own knowledge and traditions. Discussions focused on how these values

and long held practices could be included in or complement the current caribou management best practices of the Canadian Wildlife Service, specifically under the Species at Risk program.



Etienne Pastiwet talking about Innu legends and knowledge on the caribou with Stu Luttich and Gary Yetman.



Tshishennuat (elder) Pien Penashue

The module was also taught by Stu Luttich, former Newfoundland/Labrador provincial biologist and one of the foremost experts on the biology of the Woodland Caribou boreal population of Labrador. Mr. Luttich was contracted to help design the module and instruct the Innu Guardians. Mr. Luttich worked in cooperation with Rebecca Jeffries, Newfoundland/Labrador Provincial wild life officer, who also helped with supplying some of the necessary equipment, e.g., caribou collars and jaw bones. The module also included classroom presentations.



Learning to age caribou jawbones



Identifying liver flukes in caribou

Dr. Alexander MacLeod, Atlantic Canada Studies Undergraduate Coordinator at Saint Mary's University, also participated along with Dr. Trudy Sable. Dr. MacLeod is part of the SSHRC research team assessing the accreditation and possible certification of the Innu Environmental Guardians Program through Saint Mary's University.



Alexander MacLeod

Five youth participated in the module assisting in the documentation of the module with both video cameras and digital cameras. These youth were part of the SSHRC funded projects, *Pathways to the Future: Creating a Brighter Tomorrow for Innu Youth*, and the *Finding our Way, Finding Our Future: Creating Alternative Educational Paths for Innu Youth*. They also participated in a *Photo-Voice* Project funded by Environment Canada Atlantic Region. Environment Canada loaned five digital cameras for the youth to begin create a photo narrative of some aspect of their community life they wished to share with the public. The youth also assisted Trudy Sable with the videotaping of the workshop using equipment from the Gorsebrook Research Institute as part of an ongoing film project and documentation of these modules.



Innu youth Jerry Rich assisting with videotaping the module

Photos by T. Sable